

An important message about care for children on MassHealth

This message is for school nurses, child-care providers, school districts, Head Start programs, Early Intervention Program providers, and other providers and clinicians who come into contact with children under the age of 21.

As you know, it is important for children who are under the age of 21 to see a primary-care doctor or nurse on a regular basis to stay healthy. These visits are called well-child visits.

Well-child visits

MassHealth pays for members who are under age 21 (except those with MassHealth Limited) to see their primary-care doctor or nurse for well-child visits at least once every year, and more often if the child is under age two. At these visits, a child's primary-care doctor or nurse checks the child's physical health, dental health, behavioral health, development, and need for immunizations. MassHealth members under age 21 can also visit their primary-care doctor or nurse any time there is a health need.

You should encourage parents or guardians who have children under the age of 21 to take them to their primary-care doctor or nurse for a checkup even when the children are well. If you as a provider have a concern about the child's behavioral health, you can encourage the parent or guardian to raise the concern at the well-child visit. Remember to follow up after the appointment with the parent or guardian to find out how things went. Ask the family if there are ways that you might be able to help with any issues or concerns that might have been raised.

You should remind parents and guardians that it is important to make and keep appointments for well-child care at the ages below. By regularly taking children for well-child visits, a child's doctor or nurse can find and treat small problems before they become big ones.

Here are the ages to take a child for a well-child visit:

- 1 to 2 weeks
- 1 month
- 2 months
- 4 months
- 6 months
- 9 months
- 12 months
- 15 months
- 18 months
- ages 2 through 20 — once a year

MassHealth members under age 21 who are enrolled in a MassHealth managed-care plan get these visits from their primary-care doctor or nurse in that health plan. MassHealth members under age 21 who are not enrolled in a managed-care plan can get these services from any MassHealth primary-care doctor or nurse.

How to find a primary-care doctor or nurse to provide well-child visits for children with MassHealth coverage

Most MassHealth-enrolled children already have a primary-care doctor or nurse. However, if a parent or guardian of a MassHealth-enrolled child does not know who their child's primary-care doctor or nurse is, or if they need help finding a primary-care doctor or nurse for a child, the parent or guardian can call MassHealth Customer Service at 1-800-841-2900. If a child is enrolled in a MassHealth managed-care plan, the parent or guardian can contact the child's health plan for help too. The phone numbers are listed at the end of this notice.

Standardized behavioral-health (mental health and substance abuse) screens at well-child visits

Starting December 31, 2007, MassHealth requires primary-care doctors and nurses to offer to use a standardized behavioral-health (mental health and substance abuse) screening tool at every well-child visit for children under the age of 21 who are enrolled in MassHealth to help detect issues with behavioral health, social-emotional well-being, or mental health. This screening tool helps to identify behavioral health concerns early and will provide an opportunity for parents and guardians to discuss a child's behavioral health needs with his or her primary-care doctor or nurse or specialist.

A behavioral-health screening tool is a short list of questions or a checklist that the parent, guardian, or child (depending on the child's age) fills out and then talks about with the doctor or nurse. The primary-care doctor or nurse might use:

- the Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC);
- the Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS); or
- some other tool.

Parents and guardians can ask a child's primary-care doctor or nurse which tool he or she uses.

Talking about the completed tool will help a child's doctor or nurse decide if follow-up care or further assessment is needed. If a parent or guardian decides that a child needs to see a behavioral-health provider, the child's primary-care doctor or nurse will tell them how to get needed services. For additional assistance, parents or guardians can call the child's health plan or call MassHealth Customer Service. These phone numbers are at the end of this notice.

Follow-up for behavioral-health issues after well-child visits

Standardized needs assessments conducted by a behavioral-health (mental health and substance abuse) provider

Starting in late 2008, when a child who is under age 21 and enrolled in MassHealth visits a behavioral-health provider, the provider will give the child an assessment using the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) tool. The CANS tool will help the behavioral-health provider collect information and make recommendations about the child's behavioral health needs. If the child needs further treatment, the behavioral-health provider will work with the parent or guardian to create a treatment plan.

Behavioral-health (mental health and substance abuse) services available now

Children enrolled in MassHealth are covered for office visits with a behavioral-health provider. If a child needs more services, MassHealth currently covers other services, such as Family Stabilization Team (FST) services. These services are available now for any child enrolled in MassHealth who needs them. Services must be determined to be medically necessary for your child before MassHealth will pay for them.

Parents and guardians can talk to a child's primary-care doctor or nurse, behavioral-health provider, or health plan, or MassHealth Customer Service for information about these services and how to get them.

Behavioral-health (mental health and substance abuse) services for MassHealth Standard and CommonHealth members under the age of 21 available in the future

MassHealth will soon cover several new behavioral-health services for MassHealth Standard and CommonHealth members under the age of 21. These new services will be for children with a serious emotional disturbance. This also includes children who have both a serious emotional disturbance and another condition such as autism spectrum disorder. Once MassHealth gets approval from the federal government for these services, MassHealth will give you more information about them.

What can you do if a child (or any of his or her family members) is not on MassHealth?

In addition to MassHealth, Massachusetts offers several other health-insurance and health-assistance programs at no cost or low cost. To find out if a child you are working with (or any of his or her family members) qualifies for MassHealth or any other Massachusetts health-insurance or health-assistance program, call MassHealth Customer Service at the number listed below.

Important phone numbers

MassHealth Customer Service

1-800-841-2900

TTY: 1-800-497-4648 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)

Boston Medical Center HealthNet Plan

1-888-217-3501

TTY: 1-800-421-1220 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)

Fallon Community Health Plan

1-800-868-5200

TTY: 1-877-608-7677 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)

Neighborhood Health Plan

1-800-462-5449

TTY: 1-800-655-1761 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)

Network Health

1-888-257-1985

TTY: 617-806-8196 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)

Primary Care Clinician (PCC) Plan

1-800-841-2900

TTY: 1-800-497-4648 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)

Massachusetts Behavioral Health Partnership

1-800-495-0086

TTY: 617-790-4130 (for people with partial or total hearing loss)